

Brushy Creek Rec. Area  
Trail Advisory Board Annual Meeting  
Brushy Creek Area Office  
December 13, 2004

Meeting was called to order at 6:10 pm. This is the first meeting of the newly appointed board. The new appointments are for a 3 year term and will expire in 2007. The board members present were: Ruth Nelleson, Kristie Schaff, Pat Reed, Myron Groat, Mike Tinkham, and Chad Kelchen. Absent were Linda Jenny, Donna Christensen, and Kevin Szcodoronski. Richard Wagener, Steve Bell, Greg Van Fosson, and Amber O'Neill were also present. Officer elections were postponed until the next meeting. Elections were held at the spring meeting on April 13, 2004.

#### Old Business

Greg started off with a discussion on the "At – Grade" crossing in the south campground. He wanted to make clear to the board that there may have been a misunderstanding at the last board meeting and that Donna was unable to tell the board that she had found a possible funding source for the crossing. Donna had found a federal trail grant that may cover the cost of the crossing. Greg added that this particular grant was the one which funds the entire trail program in all state parks. To apply for both situations would jeopardize the entire state program. Also, there is the issue of gaining county support. As stated at the last meeting, the county engineer is not in favor of this crossing. Myron asked how heavily the illegal crossing is being used. Steve, Amber, and Chad agreed that numbers of people crossing at the campground entrance are declining. Chad mentioned that no citations have been issued in this area and staff is continuing to inform people that this crossing is unsafe.

Chad thanked the board for their participation in the new Adopt-A-Trail Program. The waterbar repairs performed during the board's volunteer day last summer withstood the summer season. The waterbars on the preserve are in need of maintenance for the upcoming season. Myron asked how many times trails had been closed in the past season and what was the procedure for closing trails. Chad and Amber responded that they do not keep track of how many times trails are closed. Also, the determination of trail closure is taken each time it rains. Several sections of trail are checked to determine if trails remain open or closed. At that point signs and the park answering machine are updated. Kristie and Mike added that they thought the trail closing procedure was working well and that staff were not being overly sensitive to rain.

#### New Business

Greg started off new business with an update on cabins. The DNR, Prairie Rivers RC&D, and Iowa Central Community College are partners in an economic development opportunity to build camping cabins from value added lumber. This process is a plan to develop a camping cabin kit made from the center of an oak log. Traditionally this piece was used for pallet material and has a very low value. The proposed plan would shape this log cant into a D log to be used for a cabin. The procedure would eventually be used to create new business and jobs in the area, as these cabins would eventually be made available to a wide market. The first prototype cabin is expected to become available sometime summer 2005. The camping cabin will be 12x16 with electricity, simple furniture, and heating/AC.

Chad gave a quick update on reservations. Statewide cabin rental will be put into a reservation system in early 2005 with hopes for a campground reservation system to be online in 2006. There are many things yet to be determined with the reservation system. The basics for now will be a internet service with a small call in center. The conversation continued about different ideas and needs for a reservation system. Richard mentioned the need for the overflow area. Greg noted that an overflow area will no longer be offered at Brushy Creek. The original overflow area was only to be used until the completion of the south equine campground. In the past, the overflow areas have put undue strain on sewer and water facilities and are not adequately equipped (hitch rails, tables, fire rings) for campers. Greg went on to mention that capacities for campgrounds are determined by sanitary facilities. Amber and Chad mentioned that in previous years the number of campers in the overflow would have fit into the newly added campsites in the south campground. Pat asked if there has been any studies done on how many campsites can Brushy Creek support. There have been no studies to date. Pat also asked what are the rules on campsite occupancy, and went on to describe a situation where several tents and campers were located on one site. Chad replied that campground rules are 1 camping unit with 6 adults and a small tent for children under 18.

The issue of non equestrian users in equestrian camps was raised by Mike and Richard. Mike cited instances when he was approached by equestrians in camp complaining about this issue. Chad replied that often family and friends camp together but all may not have horses. Chad also mentioned that nonequestrians are required to pay the \$3 equestrian fee when occupying equestrian sites.

Chad brought the board up to date on the all weather trail plan. He handed out a map, budget and timeline which had been submitted as part of a trail grant. The goal of this project is to provide a section of trail which would remain open regardless of weather. The project would rock the 12 mile section of the lake trail with roadstone. Greg presented his concerns and asked the riders if they would use the trail under wet conditions or just ride along side. If trail users won't use the rock trail then the considerable work and financing required to complete the project would not be worth the investment. Board members were

unanimous that people would use the rock surfaced trail. Board members asked if other trails would be surfaced as well. Chad responded that no further plans for surfacing will be made. Richard asked how riders from the south camp would get to the trail heads around the lake. Chad responded that they would have to trailer or ride the roads to get to the lake trail, he did not want to rock any more trails than the plan required.

Richard mentioned that he was attending the meeting to represent a group of users who no longer used the park because of its "unfriendly policies" towards equestrians. He noted that he understood the concerns of erosion, but wanted the ability to ride the trails regardless of rainfall conditions. He further questioned if ample funding were supplied, could the area revert to the policy of not closing trails during wet conditions. He cited examples of state forests not closing their trails. DNR staff replied that the costs of this type of management would be prohibitive and that it would require a long term source of funding. There are several other reasons for continuing the policy: for the most part users do not wish to ride through large mud bogs, there is a safety concern for riders and their respective animals and the responsibility of the DNR to protect and conserve the resource. Staff acknowledged the policy does at time present a inconvenience to trail users but the policy has proven to be necessary for the long term care and use of our trail system. Hopefully some of the problems can be alleviated by the addition of an all weather trail ( this is dependant on funding, the current grant request will be answered in spring 2005) Board members supported the current policy in a lengthy discussion. Greg added that there is currently an effort to provide more uniform trail closing procedures for all State Parks, Recreation Areas and State Forest Areas.

The next meeting is scheduled for 6 pm on Tuesday April 19,2005. A tour will precede the meeting at 4pm.

Kristie motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:30pm. Mike seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned.